

# Stories of Recovery in LA County:

## Dwyane Clements

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My name is Dwyane Clements. I am a 56 year old male and have been in recovery for the past 10 years. I was raised in an alcoholic household, and was the younger of two children who received the “brunt” of my father’s alcoholic rage-usually on the weekends when my mother was at work. As a child, I felt like I never fit in and spent most of my time alone. I learned to fight at an early age and feel like that was my saving grace throughout my school years. At 17, I had a physical altercation with my father after he came home drunk, forever changing our relationship. Instead of physical abuse, his emotional and mental abuse intensified. That summer I had my first encounter with alcohol and thought it was the best thing that ever happened in my life.



I fell into the same pattern as my father; drinking on the weekends, isolating myself, and becoming mean when intoxicated. At the age of 20, I got married and had a son, but was not ready to become a father. I started a career in construction, but still felt like I was somehow different. I internalized everything and had an overwhelming fear that something was not right. At 26, my second child was born, a daughter. Her birth sent me into a deep depression because I was still not ready to be a father—to one, let alone, two children. I immersed myself in work and started to look for acceptance in the wrong places.

In 1987, I was introduced to methamphetamine. I felt like I finally found the “cure all” to my problems. This drug allowed me to escape reality for days on end. I fell in love with the drug the first time I tried it. In order to get “meth,” I was introduced to and asked to join a motorcycle club where the drugs were plentiful. Riding with the club members made me feel like I was finally accepted by my peers. I was still able to hold onto my job, but because of the circumstances needed to obtain club membership, I was hardly ever home. I would stay high for days and miss work. I was eventually laid off because I couldn’t make it to work due to withdrawals or lack of sleep. I started to experience extreme rage associated with meth withdrawals and started to physically, emotionally, and mentally abuse family members and others close to me.

In 2000, I was “disassociated” from the motorcycle club because of uncontrollable rage issues attributed to drug withdrawals. I withdrew from reality even further. In 2002, I was hospitalized against my will due to rage and extreme methamphetamine intoxication. I was diagnosed with severe depression and co-occurring disorder (COD), which I firmly denied was a problem. I accepted the fact that I was addicted, but the mental illness diagnosis threw me for a loop. The shame I felt as a result of the mental health diagnosis really made me feel like I didn’t belong in society, and I refused to seek help for the mental health issue.

I did, however, attend Alcoholic Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous meetings the day I was released from the mental hospital.

In late 2002, I was finally ready to address the mental health issue and made an appointment at a County Mental Health Clinic in Cerritos, California. There, with the help of a therapist and medication, I was able to accept the mental illness diagnosis and realized that having COD was not a "death sentence." By attending group sessions and individual therapy sessions, I discovered that I could not only help myself, but that others were also thriving with the same diagnosis as me. For the second time in my life, I felt I finally fit in. Addressing my COD has opened so many doors for me over the last 10 years. I have been able to achieve a new career with Los Angeles County Department of Public Health, Substance Abuse Prevention and Control (SAPC). My new position as Recovery Advocate for SAPC allows me to help others that seek recovery, find recovery.